

Past tenses

The simple past tense is usually used to describe actions that occurred at a specific time in the past.

The construction of The Titanic began in March 1909.

When we refer to two different actions in the past, we use the past perfect tense to refer to the action that happened first.

When it finally left Southampton for New York on April 10th, 1912, more than 2,200 passengers and crew had boarded the ship.

This means that the people had boarded *before* the ship left Southampton.

Task 1: Underline the actions that happened first.

1. Before the accident happened, many passengers had been in the restaurant.
2. Only a few people had gotten into the lifeboats when the ship sank.
3. When the Titanic finally sank, many people had already died.
4. Some people had left on lifeboats when the ship sank.
5. Before it sank, the Titanic had taken on a lot of water.

Task 2: Complete the sentences with the correct tense of the verbs in parentheses.

1. After Bob _____ (spend) his vacation in Italy he _____ (want) to learn Italian.
2. Helen _____ (call) Dad at work before she _____ (leave) for her trip.
3. Susan _____ (turn on) the radio after she _____ (wash) the dishes.
4. When he _____ (arrive), the tennis match _____ already _____ (start).
5. She _____ (watch) a movie on TV after the children _____ (go) to bed.
6. After Albert _____ (make) breakfast he _____ (text) his friend.
7. I _____ (be) very tired because I _____ (study) too much.
8. Alan _____ (ride) his bike for an hour before he _____ (join) his friends.